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000 put and are without value unless properly interpreted. These statistics should not be rejected outright, but should be juxtaposed with the mass of evidence available from other sources, and then interpreted. It would be misleading to accept blindly every report on life behind the Iron Curtain, whether brought by refugees, published in the exile press, or found in letters
204 coming from that area. The Communist press tries to suppress most adverse information but there are limits to such a policy. If the Iron Curtain papers complain about any material shortage or attack any given material situation, it is a sure sign that the situation has become unbearable for the citizens.

• 362 On the basis of joint interpretation of the press, private information, and statistical data, the following picture of the economic and social conditions of the captive nations may be formed. The housing situation is bad and probably getting worse because, however large the current building project may be, it cannot provide homes for all those living in the existing deteriorating dwellings and because the building cannot keep up with the rapid increase of urban populations. New apartment houses are jerry-built and in need of constant repair, and the family of a privileged worker or technician will be happy if his services are recompensed by a flat of two rooms with kitchenette and shower. The great urban masses are housed much below this level. The housing problem has not been solved in Russia outside of Moscow. There is no reason to believe it has been solved in Eastern Europe. It will take a dozen or more years to rebuild the war-destroyed cities of East Berlin, Dresden, Budapest, Warsaw, Danzig, Stettin, and Breslau, to mention only a few, and, even when these cities are restored, the quality of the new construction will almost certainly be inferior to that of the prewar years. According to the United Nations, the rate of new construction behind the Iron Curtain is several times slower than it is in Scandinavia, Britain, and Western Germany. Domestic

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commodities, such as kitchen equipment and furniture, are rare and expensive, above the means of an average family, and modern house appliances are hardly known at all. A private car is an extreme rarity and will remain so within the foreseeable future since few passenger cars are being manufactured and almost none imported.

As far as food is concerned, there is much truth in the Communist assertion that with the rapid increase of city populations the production of foodstuffs lags behind the growing demand. Figures for food production in this area do not indicate the amount of consumption, since much of the food produced is stocked as army and war reserve or exported to Russia and China. The true situation is that while there is no actual hunger most of the population is fed at standards far below those of Western Europe. The diet is monotonous, consisting largely of bread, noodles, cereals, potatoes, common vegetables, and puddings, to judge from advice given to housewives by women's publications. Protective foods are fewer than before the war though probably more evenly distributed. Before the war, in the poorer parts of the area, the urban unemployed and millions of so-called dwarf-sized farm holders were as a rule underfed. Today the unemployed have disappeared, but the inmates of the labor camps are starving, and the poor peasants are no better off than before. The families living on middle-sized farms consume more food than before the war, because an incentive for selling produce is lacking.

The caloric value of foodstuffs consumed by the working population in the cities has, if anything, decreased. At home, families eat what the British used to eat a few years ago, but they have less of it. The quality of food consumed in the public eating places maintained by factories and the like is described as extremely bad, and so is the service. Standing in food lines, often in vain, consumes a large part of the housewife's time. This, added to the difficulty of cooking be-